

HYREE SAINTS

FOR THE

LENCREDULOUS



THREE SAINTS for
the INCREDULOUS

With prayerful good wishes
Robert E. Holland, A.P.

HY
HERE

SAINTS

FOR THE

NCREDULOUS

Robert E. Holland
of the Society of Jesus

with pictures drawn by
LeRoy H. Appleton

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THE THREE SAINTS

<i>Pre-face:</i> THE INCREDULOUS	9
Saint Gregory Thaumaturgus	13
Saint Paul the First Hermit	19
Saint Scholastica	25
<i>Post-face:</i> THE CREDULOUS	30

THE PICTURES

East-West-East-West Head Shaker	9
Mountain Mover	12
Grave Diggers	18
Rain Bringer	24
North-South-North-South Head Shaker	30



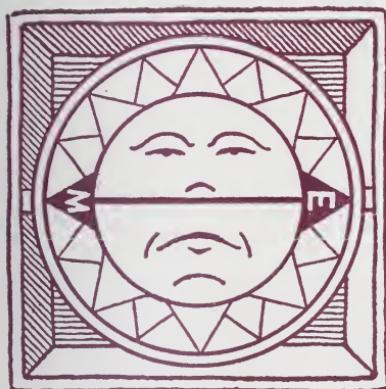
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THREE SAINTS for
the INCREDULOUS

PRE ~ FACE

The Incredulous



HERE IS A PICTURE OF THE East-West-East-West Head Shaker. His unidirectional head-shaking is habitual. It comes from belonging to The Incredulous—People not altogether devoid of Credulity, but characteristically great defenders against any who try to put a Strain upon it. Unbelievers belong to The

Incredulous. But not all The Incredulous are necessarily Unbelievers. At times and about some things, even Believers, who would die for their belief in God, in His goodness and omnipotence, and in the Teachings of His Holy Church, will balk if anybody imposes a Strain upon their Credulity. That is what The Incredulous always fight off—a *Strain*. They shake heads East—West—East—West.

Though The Incredulous seem to ignore other points of the Compass than East—West, yet their geographic distribution is all over the inhabited world. Their ethnic provenance is the human race. The Incredulous are of all times, including—and especially—the Present.

The Incredulous are not an Organized Body or an Association, with Constitution and Bye-laws; they have no General Program of Objectives. Few of them Ingersoll their weight about, watch in hand, ‘giving God—if there be one—a minute in

which to strike them dead.' Yet, it is easy to identify The Incredulous, for in reaction to some Object of Credibility offered, all use a kind of Slogan, variously expressed. Here are samples: *Prove that! You can't prove that! No documentation! U-m-m-m, but . . . An Old Wives' Tale!* These are some of the more polite forms, but one hears also: *Where do you get that stuff! The bunk! Tell that to the Marines!*

At the Extremes of Incredulity are the Mildly Incredulous and the Wholly Incredulous. Ranging between the Extremes are many Degrees, depending on the Object of Credibility presented, and on other circumstances, such as a dyspeptic stomach. Now, the Extremes are really more interesting than the Degrees between. First, there are the Mildly Incredulous. These are many, and are exercised daily over hundreds of things. They are always saying, *Think of that! Now, what do you know! Do tell!* Then, there are the Wholly Incredulous, whose name must not be taken too strictly, because no one entirely discredits everything.

Among the Wholly Incredulous, a relatively few Unbelievers are most conspicuous, since they resent even the Slightest Strain on their Credulity. Belief in the existence of God puts almost no Strain on anyone's Credulity, except on the Unbeliever's. He is the ultra-extreme of The Incredulous, who cuts sharp and clean under the foundational Credulity of everyone else: no God, then no goodness, no almighty power, no teachings of a holy church; no church.

That, I think, is the worst effect Incredulity can have, but further, under its influence The Incredulous even *look* queer—unpleasant, anyhow. Proceeding from the top of the head downward: the brow gets horizontal wrinkles; the eyes go nearly closed in unbecoming slits—as if just not to see. The nose is not always affected, but sometimes makes a sniffy muscular contraction, as though offended by a noisome odor. The mouth is hard-lipped, compressed, a double straight line, with possibly a

downward and outward curve at the ends. And the whole head begins to oscillate East—West—East—West, back and forth, mildly or vigorously, as may be, in the Degree of Incredulity.

I suppose every honest man will admit that at times and about some Objects of Credibility—which are legion—he has found himself in one or other Degree of Incredulity. In this respect I do not wish to argue with The Incredulous, for sometimes I myself am Incredulous: my pet Incredible is that so many people are as Incredulous as they claim to be. Much less do I wish to pick a quarrel. Nor do I know, of course, whether You are One of The Incredulous; or if You are, in what Degree, or about what. But since I think—what The Incredulous doubtless deny—Credulity is an elastic thing, I wish to submit that like all good rubber it will bear a Reasonable Strain, and bear it, under the right circumstances, without danger of snapping.

Accordingly, for all in whom the Will-to-Believe is not wanting, or in whom Intellectual Pride—a mask The Incredulous often wear—is not a barrier, I here offer some Objects of Credibility taken from the recorded history of the Saints. The Marvelous and the Miraculous in these *Acta Sanctorum*, as related, are a Potential Strain on Credulity, and it may be that some heads will shake East—West—East—West. But hoping for the Best, I give You: *Three Saints for the Incredulous*.



Saint Gregory Thaumaturgus

Born at Neocaesarea in Pontus, Asia Minor, c. A.D. 213

Died Bishop of Neocaesarea, c. A.D. 275

HE BISHOP of Neocaesarea stood one evening looking at the site for his new church. On his left waves broke against the precipitous sea-cliff; on his right a mountain rose sheer. The level shelf between was narrow. "It's too narrow," the Bishop said. "I want a wider church than that ground will take." So the Bishop knelt down and asked the Lord to push the mountain back far enough. Then he rose and went home to bed.

I am putting Saint Gregory Thaumaturgus first of these *Three Saints for The Incredulous*, because I consider him, as it were, basic material. He is called *Thaumaturgus* from two Greek words which together mean *Wonder Worker*. Before Gregory was a Christian his name was Theodore—*Gift of God*. Even after Baptism he was still a gift of God in Neocaesarea, because of the wonders he worked. Saint Basil was so much impressed with the marvelous in Saint Gregory that he compared him with Moses, the Prophets, and the Apostles.

After a night of good rest, the Bishop of Neocaesarea returned early to the site of his future church. He had never doubted this place would be its site. There must have been others, unobstructed, and as You and I would view them, possibly even better; but Saint Gregory looked for no other site,

because he would have his church there, on the shelf between the sea-cliff and the mountain. Therefore, he was not surprised to come out in the morning and find the mountain now standing back far enough from the cliff to make room for his church. He had received the thing itself, just as asked; not a substitution.

The wellspring of this thaumaturgy is the promise of the Lord Jesus: “Have faith in God. I promise you, if anyone says to this mountain, Remove, and be cast into the sea, and has no hesitation in his heart, but is sure that what he says is to come about, his wish will be granted him. I tell you, then, when you ask for anything in prayer, you have only to believe that it is yours, and it will be granted you” (Mark 11:22-24).

There is a deal of speculation one might indulge in here, but most of it is idle. One thing—and not idle—is to ask the questions, Why was Saint Gregory so set on having that particular place? Why bother Heaven, when other places would do? Why not (since the Lord’s promise contains it in so many words), even have asked that the offending mountain be cast into the sea? Though in all common sense it is just to put these queries, I cannot answer them well, unless it be only to say that Saint Gregory’s business is his own; that he asked for what *he* wanted, from a heart in which was no hesitation; that what he asked was conformed to God’s will—and so was granted him.

As nearly idle speculation, one might ask, While Saint Gregory was at it, why not pray for already-carved stones, made out of the mountain’s part that was in the way? Even more, Why not even pray that such carved stones be celestially erected into the church, without benefit of builders? Or, to go the whole hog, might not Saint Gregory have asked, and been granted an entire church, completely erected on his chosen site, and altogether furnished throughout? My answer is—letting each Degree of The Incredulous make his own—that none of these things is impossible, none inconsistent with the Lord’s promise: “You have only to believe that it is yours, and it will be granted

you." And yet, there is such a thing as presumption, which consists in overstepping the bounds of God's ordinary Providence for the lives of men. If You ask beyond that, be prepared to accept a substitute, of God's own choosing.

But who was this amazing Wonder Worker? He was the son of pagan parents. When Gregory was fourteen years old, his father died. The boy wished to become a lawyer, and so set out with his brother Athenodorus for that famous seat of learning in the Hellenic world, Beirut. The boys accompanied their married sister as far as Caesarea in Palestine, where their brother-in-law was just taking over office (A.D. 227) as assessor to the Roman governor. They got no farther, for here they met and became pupils of brilliant Origen, who not only taught them rhetoric and philosophy, but won them to Christianity. Seven years later Gregory was home again, a capable scholar, and still bent on practice of law, but soon to be consecrated Bishop of Neocaesarea. In those times as few as ten Christians were governed by a Bishop.

Besides the mountain-removal, Saint Gregory worked other wonders, too. There was a bog, over which for some obscure reason the people used to quarrel: he prayed successfully to dry it up. The River Lycus had a bad habit of overflowing and spoiling the crops: Saint Gregory hobbled out to the river and stuck his cane into the bank; forthwith the cane grew into a green tree, and the Lycus nevermore passed that mark. Demons fled from men's bodies and from pagan idols at Saint Gregory's prayer.

The making of converts to Christianity became the chief business of the Bishop's career. He must have been very sedulous at it: first in the zeal of his priestly duties, and then by his theological writings. In these the discipline of the early Church, and he himself as a great champion of true doctrine of the Holy Trinity are reflected. To such means of convert-making the Bishop added a kind of showmanship, to attract the pagans, for not relying alone on the solemnity of religious ceremony, he used

to organize games and amusements for the people on festival days. Like the Apostles, Saint Gregory had become a Fisher of Men: he believed in casting a colorful fly.

In fact, all his episcopal life Saint Gregory was so active bringing pagans into the Christian fold, that on his deathbed he asked, "How many pagans are now in Neocaesarea?" And they told him, "Only seventeen." "Thank God!" Saint Gregory replied. "That's how many Christians were here, when I was first made Bishop." We do not know the census of Neocaesarea, whether at the beginning or at the end of Saint Gregory's thirty Episcopal years; but that in one generation the ratio, n -pagans to 17 Christians, was reversed, is wonder-working in high degree.

"The Oriental mind revels so naturally in the marvelous that a serious historian cannot accept unconditionally all its product; yet if ever the title *Wonder Worker* was deserved, Gregory had a right to it." Thus a modern historian, serious both in his reservation and concession. An ancient historian, Saint Gregory of Nyssa (died c. 386), is said to have been under the influence of an active imagination when he recorded his namesake's miracles. That could be. And yet, a good point as regards The Incredulous, is that Gregory of Nyssa accepted certain reported deeds of the Thaumaturgus as *miracles*. He found in them no Strain on his Credulity.

I give you then, as an exercise for your Credulity, Saint Gregory of Neocaesarea, surnamed the Wonder Worker—a great man of God. He was "creduous" to the extreme of asking in prayer for the unnecessary recession of a mountain to make place for a church that could have stood on a dozen other sites. I give you this drier-up of bogland, who thought of that as one way to stop bickering among his people; a chaser-out of demons from men's bodies and from pagan idols, unto Christian peace of soul.

The feast of Saint Gregory is November 17th; in the Mass we pray:

Grant, we beseech thee, almighty God, that the holy festival of blessed Gregory, thy Confessor and Bishop, may both increase our devotion and advance our salvation.
Through Our Lord Jesus Christ, thy Son, who liveth and reigneth with thee, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end. Amen.



Saint Paul the First Hermit

Born in the Lower Thebaïd, Egypt, A.D. 229

Died in the Thebaïd Desert, A.D. 342

SAINT PAUL the First Hermit, the next of *Three Saints for the Incredulous*, had a distinguished biographer, Saint Jerome, Confessor and Doctor of the Church, who was himself a hermit in the desert of Chalcis, southwest of Antioch—but only four years (A.D. 376–379). I find that though Critics agree Saint Jerome was a heaven-gifted writer, and a scholar of stupendous learning, yet some are among the Mildly Incredulous about his *Life* of Saint Paul the First Hermit. The great Doctor himself does not vouch for anything he puts in that book. But he did put in it everything he found in his sources; whenever there was anything marvelous about Saint Paul, he wrote it down just as recorded, without yea or nay or verbally-lifted eyebrow. If I may read between Saint Jerome's lines, I find him telling me implicitly: "Now, here it is; if You are going to ask for salt with it, I can't help that. Anyhow, I do not hesitate to write it down."

There are some really excellent persons upon whose Credulity the very idea of *hermit* seems to throw a Strain. *Hermit*, or *eremite*, is Greek, for one—apparently always a male—who departed from the society of fellow men and lived in prayer and penance, and often in profound scholarship, in the *eremia*, the desert. Hermits were sometimes called *anchorites*—Greek again

—because they *withdrew*. Hermits are thus distinguished from *cenobites*, who lived in community, the *koinos bios*.

These amazing people, the hermits, went alone into desert places, often where there were caves to shelter them; but some even climbed pillars and stood upon them for years. Others just stood out on the open ground. No doubt of it, the average man, conscious of his social nature, finds it Somewhat Incredible that anyone should select the eremitical life, or even wish to lead it. Certainly, the motive must not be less than personal sanctification and a secluded (some say a selfish) praise of God. Yet, even in our own country we have seen men like Thoreau, a kind of hermit without supernatural motive. But it is history that there were true and holy hermits, and Saint Paul was the First of them.

All hermits found in the desert the seclusion and silence they prized so highly. I must tell You a tale which illustrates how very much they prized silence, even though I can claim no authenticity for the story. In fact, I claim there is absolutely none. I shall probably deserve the Scorn of The Incredulous for my pains; anyhow, here is the tale of the *Three Hermits in Ireland*.

The Three Hermits in Ireland were not desert men, but mountain-dwellers. Each lived in his tiny bower at the top of three adjoining woody peaks, high in the silence of the sky. They had lived there for many, many years. The Hermits themselves did not remember how many; and all that long time not one of them had uttered a single word aloud—not ever.

One day, however, the Hermit on the North Mountain sighed, and said: "My, but it's quiet here." The other Hermits did not answer a syllable. But after about thirty years more of silence, the Hermit on the South Mountain sighed, and said: "Yes, it is." The other Hermits did not answer.

Again, thirty years went by, all in silence, as ever, on the three mountains, until the Hermit on the Central Mountain coughed, and said: "Brothers, if you can't be quiet, I shall have to find another mountain."

Thebes was the name of two ancient cities. One was in Boeotia, in Greece, very famous, but not Saint Paul's Thebes. He came from the other, a city that rose in all its glory from the east bank of the Upper Nile, in Egypt. Its ruins may be explored there today. Off to the southwest, lay the Thebaïd Desert, a sandy waste from which cropped hilly or mountainous regions, honeycombed with caves. In Cleopatra's time counterfeiters hid forges there, and minted spurious coin. The Thebaïd was a real estate salesman's nightmare, but a wonderful place for eluding the society of men.

When Saint Paul was sixteen years old (*c. A.D. 245*), Christians were suffering persecution under the Emperors Decius and Valerian. Paul was a Christian, a youth well educated in both Greek and in Egyptian learning. On the death of both his parents, perhaps by martyrdom, he inherited much wealth, but in the heat of the persecution had to seek refuge in a friend's house in another city. Paul's brother-in-law now cast greedy eyes on the boy's riches. Again he fled for his life, this time into the Thebaïd Desert.

"He reached at last a stony cliff [Saint Jerome writes], at the foot of which was a great cave, closed at its mouth with a stone. Having rolled this away, and exploring more greedily, he saw within a great vault open to the sky above, but shaded by the boughs of an ancient date-palm; and in it a clear spring, the rill of which, flowing a short space forth, was sucked up again by the soil."

Many a virtue is born of necessity: so with Saint Paul. At first he meant to stay in the desert only long enough to let the anti-Christian fires burn out; then he would return to Thebes. But his retreat was so secluded that no news of better days trickled in; besides, as day on day passed and the boy spent each in prayer and praise of God, he did not even look for news. He just kept on praying for an unhappy world outside, and was himself very happy here. Saint Paul died in his 113th year, still a

hermit. For the rest of his story, I turn to the *Roman Breviary*, where Saint Jerome's narrative is condensed. The translation, both here and of the *Prayer* at the end, is by the Marquess of Bute—a little emended.

Here there was a palm tree, on the fruit of which he lived, and of whose leaves he made his raiment, until he attained the age of 113 years. At that time [A.D. 342], Saint Anthony, another famous hermit, being now himself aged 90 years, received a command from God to go and see Saint Paul. They met without knowing each the other's name, and saluted each other, after which they fell straightway into a long discourse on the Kingdom of God. Now it so happened that a raven had of a long time brought Paul every day half a loaf, but on this day while they spake together he brought a whole one.

When the raven had flown away—"Well," quoth Paul, "the Lord hath sent us our dinner. Truly He is gracious; truly He is merciful. It is now sixty years that I have had half a loaf every day, but now that thou art come, Christ giveth His soldiers double rations." Then they asked a blessing, and ate together, sitting by a spring. When they were refreshed, they returned thanks, as is the custom, and afterwards spent the whole night praising God.

At break of day Paul felt the approach of death, and desired Anthony to go back to his own hermitage and bring the cloak which Athanasius had given him to use for his winding-sheet. While Anthony was on his way back from this journey, he saw in a vision the soul of Paul ascending to heaven, surrounded by choirs of Angels, and accompanied by the Prophets and Apostles.

When Anthony reached the cell of Paul, he found the dead body of the Saint in a kneeling posture, with the head thrown up and the hands stretched out towards heaven. He immediately began to chant the psalms and hymns ordained by Christian tradition, while he wrapped the body in the cloak of Athanasius.

He had no spade to dig a grave, but two lions came racing from the desert, as though to attend the burying, and scratched a hole big enough to hold a man's body, with their paws, showing meanwhile such grief as their nature alloweth. When they were gone away, Anthony put the holy body in this hole, covered it with earth, and arranged it like a Christian's grave.

Saint Anthony took away for himself Saint Paul's tunic, which he had woven out of the palm leaves, somewhat after the manner of basketwork; and this tunic Saint Anthony was in the habit of wearing on the great days of the Passover and Pentecost, as long as he lived.

The Feast of Saint Paul the First Hermit is January 15th; in the Mass, this is the Prayer:

O God, who year by year dost gladden us by the solemn feast-day of thy blessed Confessor Paul, mercifully grant unto all who keep his birthday, grace to follow after the pattern of his godly conversation. *Through Our Lord Jesus Christ, thy Son, who liveth and reigneth with thee, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end. Amen.*



Saint Scholastica

Born at Nursia, in Italy, c. A.D. 480
Died near Monte Cassino, a little before A.D. 543

ELADY is the third of *Three Saints for The Incredulous*, the twin sister of Saint Benedict of Nursia, that humanly-sensitive Father of Western Monasticism. She is Saint Scholastica, a nun of her brother's great Order, the Benedictines. I suppose that petty quarrels and bickering among brothers and sisters is common at times in any family, but I think that where there are twins, the two are likely to be together against the rest, and themselves seldom fall out. There was a lifelong and affectionate unity between Saint Benedict and his twin, Saint Scholastica. But since from early years each had followed the monastic life, their union was of and in the spirit, by a tie even stronger than their birth, the bond of a single devotion to the Lord.

In recounting the story of Saint Scholastica, I shall not try to do better than give You Pope Saint Gregory the Great, *Dialogues*, book ii, chapter 33, in the English translation made by the Marquess of Bute. Here is Saint Gregory's narrative:

The worshipful Scholastica, the sister of our Father Benedict, was hallowed unto the Lord Almighty from a child. Her custom was to come to see her brother once every year. And when she came, the man of God went down unto her, not far from the gate, but, as it were, within the borders of his monastery. And

there was a day when she came, as her custom was, and her worshipful brother went down to her, and his disciples with him. Then they passed the whole day together, praising God, and speaking one to the other of spiritual things. And when the night came, they brake bread together. And while they were yet at table, and conversed together on spiritual things, the hour was late.

Then the holy woman his sister besought him, saying: "Leave me not, I pray thee, this night, but let us speak even until morning of the gladness of the eternal life." He answered her: "What is it that thou sayest, my sister? I can by no means remain out of my cell."

Now the firmament was so clear that there were no clouds in the sky. Then the holy nun, when she had heard the words of her brother, that he would not abide with her, clasped her hands on the table, and laid her face on her hands, and besought the Lord Almighty. And it came to pass that when she lifted up her head from the table, there were great lightnings and thunderings, and a flood of rain, insomuch that neither the worshipful Benedict nor the brethren that were with him could move as much as a foot over the threshold of the place where they sat.

Now when the holy woman laid her head in her hands upon the table, she wept bitterly, and as she wept, the clearness of the sky was turned to a tempest. As she prayed, immediately the flood followed. And the time was so, that she lifted up her head when it thundered, and when she had lifted up her head, the rain came.

When the man of God saw that he could not return to his monastery, because of the lightnings, and thunderings, and the great rain, he was sorrowful and grieved, saying: "Almighty God forgive thee, my sister; what is this that thou hast done?" She answered him: "Behold, I besought thee, and thou wouldest not hear; I besought my God, and He hath heard me; if, therefore, thou wilt, go forth, leave me alone, and go thy way to thy

monastery." But he could not, and so he tarried in the same place, not willingly, but of necessity. And so it came to pass that they slept not, all that night, but fed one another with discourse on spiritual things.

And when the morning was come, the worshipful woman arose, and went unto her own cell, and the man of God went back to his monastery.

And, behold, after three days he was sitting in his cell, and he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and saw the soul of his sister, delivered from the body, fly to heaven in a bodily shape like a dove. Wherefore he rejoiced because of the glory that was revealed in her, and gave thanks to Almighty God in hymns and praises, and made known to the brethren that she was dead. He commanded them also to go and take up her body, and bring it to his monastery, and lay it in the grave which he had made ready for himself. Whereby it came to pass that they twain who had ever been of one mind in the Lord, even in death were not divided.

That is the story of the third of *Three Saints for the Incredulous*. I do not need to say it is a beautiful story. Perhaps I do need to insist, for some Degrees of The Incredulous, upon the Credibility of its marvelous downpour of rain and frightening disturbance of the elements. No, not exactly upon these things, for they are of common experience. None will say that a sudden summer thunder shower is incredible. But some may find a Strain upon Credulity, to be assured that Saint Scholastica's tears were exactly coincident to great spilling over of the rain-clouds; that her lifted-up-head was each time the closing of a celestial electric circuit, with flash and crash of lightning and thunder. Some Degrees of The Incredulous will say that these lines in the Scholastica picture are painted too bright of color: in a word, incredible.

Well, then, is *this* story incredible? I happen to know one who was involved; he is not given to exaggeration. Here is the

story: Some Novices were given leave to have an all-day outing on the lake near by; but the sky that morning was black and threatening. The Novices went to their Sub-master and asked him to join them in saying the *Magnificat* against the rain. But he said, "No, I can't do that! Look, it's almost raining now!" So, the Novices went to their Father Master, and asked *him* to say the *Magnificat*. He did. And presently the sun came out gloriously. Now, when the Sub-master saw that, he repented, and himself said the *Magnificat*. But, alas! in a brief quarter of an hour the sun went under clouds again, the rain came pouring down, and the Novices had no outing. "I promise you, if anyone . . . has no hesitation in his heart, but is sure that what he says is to come about, his wish will be granted him."

I submit that Saint Scholastica had no hesitation in her heart; she saw rain as a probable means of keeping Saint Benedict for holy conversation all the night; she prayed God for rain, and got it. If she is said to have got it in a very theatrical way, that, I say, does not count: the essentially credible fact is what counts. Saint Gregory Thaumaturgus asked God to be *rid* of troublesome things, the better to obtain material needs. Saint Scholastica asked God to ruin the beauty of an evening sky with a storm, asked Him to *grant* her troublesome things, the better to subserve her spiritual joy. Both were "credulous" of what would grow out of a prayer rooted in faith.

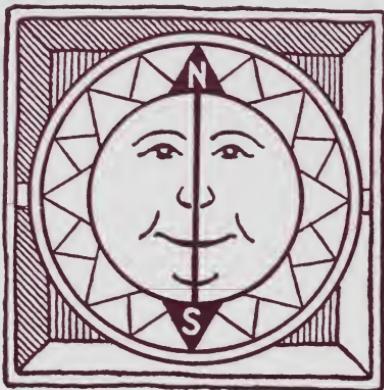
I can picture that holy nun's faintly smiling lips, and see the twinkle of a woman's victory in her saintly eyes, when facing her venerable brother she said, "I asked you, and you said No; I asked God, and there is the rain! So go home now, if you can, to your monastery, and leave me here." Well, I venture that Saint Benedict *could* have braved that storm anyhow! But if any tell me he would or should have, immediately I join the ranks of The Incredulous, on that head. I feel sure he was not afraid of getting drenched, and I think he saw in that sudden rain, a sign of God's will to remain.

The feast of Saint Scholastica is February 10th; in the Mass of that day we pray:

O God, who to show us the path of innocence didst cause the soul of thy Virgin Scholastica to mount up to heaven in the form of a dove: grant that through her merits and prayers, we may so live in innocence that we may be worthy to attain eternal happiness. *Through Our Lord Jesus Christ, thy Son, who liveth and reigneth with thee, one God, world without end. Amen.*

POST~FACE

The Credulous



HERE IS A PICTURE OF THE North—South—North—South Head Shaker. His unidirectional head-shaking is habitual. It comes from belonging to The Credulous. These are not entirely devoid of Incredulity, but are people who exercise it very little. The chief Strain upon their Credulity is felt when matters

of Divine Revelation are scoffed at, or when they are asked to dethrone the Spiritual by dragging it to the level of the Purely Material. In such cases The Credulous do not understand why everyone is not like themselves, Credulous. The Credulous of this kind and degree are called The Believers—The Faithful.

The geographic distribution of The Credulous is co-extensive with that of The Incredulous: all over the inhabited world, in the whole human family, historically at all times, even the Present. Likewise, The Credulous admit of Degrees—all the way from the Mildly Credulous to the Wildly Credulous. The latter are probably not of great number (no reliable statistics are available), but curiously, the Unbeliever class of The Incredulous, put The Believers among the Wildly Credulous, and sometimes even laugh at them, call them by silly nicknames, such as, *Sap*, or *Boob*, or *Stupe*. When thus attacked The Credulous (Reasonable Variety) are not intolerant or unkind; they think it's much

too bad—yes, deplorable—The Incredulous have to be that way.

A comparative study of the physiognomy of The Credulous and The Incredulous (perhaps as shown in the portraits in this book), would be interesting. But since the features of each are striking enough at a glance, I call attention only to these points: both are Head Shakers, and unidirectional, too; but for each the Compass-direction of head-shaking is in 180-degree difference.

Now, this whole subject of North-South or East-West Head-shaking is rather of more importance than just the fanciful way in which I put the matter: whether one is Credulous or Incredulous is a reality of life underneath my metaphor. And so, now I shall try to explain what I said pages back.

I said: "Hoping for the Best, I give You *Three Saints for the Incredulous*." What is that *Best* I hoped for?

Assent to Truth is a function of the Intellect. If we tried to make a list of truths to which we give assent on the basis of direct evidence, perhaps it would seem short in comparison with another list of things we accept on the authority of someone revealing the truth to us. This will be found a fact with regard to just about every class of truth, from weather reports through fashion styles and earthquakes, to Christ's testimony of Himself that He is the Son of God. All the deeds of history are here included, and among these, as alleged, the Marvelous and the Miraculous in the lives of the Saints. In short, what I have related of these Three Saints, are some Objects of Credibility, that is, from the Credulous point of view; but Objects of Incredibility from the viewpoint of The Incredulous.

Now, I assure You, I have not told these stories for their own sake—charming as I think they are—nor yet in order to convince The Incredulous of the Credibility of the tales. I have told them as a point of departure, and for the sake of the Importance of whether one is Credulous or Incredulous as an *Attitude*. For both Incredulity and Credulity are a *Frame of Mind*. Incredulity is a habitual barrier to Belief; it keeps a man from believing

enough, or perhaps from believing at all. Credulity is like a piece of iron in a magnetic field; by it a man may believe too easily, or even too much. But if a man cannot keep the virtuously middle path, if he must veer to extremes, then Credulity is the better frame for his mind than Incredulity.

Further, to be Credulous is not only more pleasant, but is more useful in life, and may prove to be the gate through which one passes into that realm of Belief which is Supernatural Faith. On the other hand, to be Incredulous is not only more unpleasant, but is inhibitive of the useful in life; it may even prove to be the barrier from that realm of Belief which is Supernatural Faith: "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1).

What, then, is the frame which surrounds your mind when the Marvelous or the Miraculous, or even only the Unusual are presented to it for assent? Your mind may be framed with Question Marks or with Exclamation Points. Or maybe around it are only Periods, the mark which stands at the end of a simple declarative sentence, such as, *Yes*.

What, finally, is the direction of your Head Shaking? Is it habitually East-West, or habitually North-South? Or, does your head move sometimes East-West, sometimes North-South, sometimes toward various compass points, in between? To "box the compass" of your mind does *not* mean to seal it in a package of Incredulity; but in transferred sense it does mean "to adopt all the points of an argument"—where argument is possible. Where there is no argument, and where the Object of Credibility is either divinely presented, or presented in God's name, then Credulity is quite synonymous with Supernatural Faith; it is good rubber, and will stretch to measure the Infinitude of God. Listen, then, with the Apostle Saint Thomas, to Our Lord: *Cease thy doubting, and believe* (John 21:29).

This is the *Best* for which I hoped in *Three Saints for the Incredulous*.

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